



REOPENING GUIDANCE DINING ROOMS

In the food business, reopening dining rooms safely and responsibly is vital for both the local economy and the well-being of our community. As dining rooms reopen, there are important steps you can take to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in Harris County.

Recommendations Before Reopening

- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation
- Conduct routine HVAC maintenance and change air filters
- Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas including offices, bathrooms, and common areas, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces
 - Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water
 - Next, disinfect surfaces using products that meet [EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, and that are appropriate for the surface
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method, contact time, and required personal protective equipment (PPE)

Operations can begin after completing the cleaning and disinfection procedures

Recommendations After Reopening

- [Follow CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfection, handwashing, social distancing, and respiratory etiquette](#)
- To help protect customers at higher risk of severe illness*, consider having dedicated hours for them to visit the food business
- Screen employees before entering the building for symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, or known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19
- Have employees wash hands when entering the building and provide hand sanitizer at accessible locations

- Make sure soap and paper towels are available at all restroom hand sinks. Keep hand sanitizer available for staff and customers
- Visibly place signage to encourage frequent hand washing and other ways to help stop the spread
- Require all employees to wear face coverings such as a mask, cloth mask, bandana, scarf or shield
- Using floor tape or visual markers to ensure staff and customers are practicing social distancing especially in areas where lines may form
- Increase routine cleaning frequencies and use approved disinfectants for restrooms, high traffic, and high touch customer use areas
- Use contactless payment options if available or take steps to minimize contact during transactions
- Move tables apart to allow for social distancing and complying with occupancy limits
- Consider stationing staff at customer entrances to open doors and control the number of customers inside to ensure social distancing in waiting areas
- Monitor number of customers in line to allow for social distancing
- Provide hand sanitizer at the start of the line
- Use disposable menus and discard after each use
- Tables cannot seat more than 6 people
- Tables must not have condiments, silverware, glassware, napkins on unoccupied tables and be cleaned and sanitized after each use
- Provide single-use condiments only upon request

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- Clean and disinfect tables, chairs, and any items that come into contact with customers between customer use
- Clean and sanitize all surfaces daily
- Use contactless payment options if available or take steps to minimize contact during transactions
- If necessary for business operation, buffets and salad bars must have an employee serve the customer and:
 - Install sneeze guards as required. Wash or change self-service utensils frequently

Planning for Absenteeism

- Determine how you will operate with a reduced staff if employees cannot work due to illness, staying home to care for sick family members and those who must stay home to watch their children
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions, so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent

Free COVID-19 Testing is Available for Everyone

We encourage business owners and employees to get free testing at a testing site. The updated online self-assessment tool is confidential and designed to serve the public in the Greater Houston area. To register for testing, visit <http://covidcheck.hctx.net/>. For those who do not have access to the online tool, call **832-927-7575** to get scheduled for testing. Free testing is available regardless of citizenship status and for those who are uninsured.

Employees should **not** return to work if they are sick. If an employee has a sick family member they live with or has been near an ill person, they should notify their employer immediately.

Please go to www.hcphtx.org for any additional information on how to keep yourself or employees safe during this pandemic.

*People at higher risk for severe illness are those who are 65 or older, especially those with chronic lung disease; moderate to severe asthma; chronic heart disease; severe obesity; diabetes; chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; liver disease; or weakened immune system.

Additional Information is Available

[FDA/NRA Guidance](#)

[The Governor's Report to Open Texas](#)

[CDC Business & Employer Resources](#)

CHECKLIST FOR MINIMUM RECOMMENDATIONS

Health Protocols for Serving Your Customers

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Parties must maintain at least 6 ft of distance from other parties at all times, including while waiting to be seated in the restaurant | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not leave condiments, silverware, flatware, glassware, or other traditional tabletop items on an unoccupied table |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No tables of more than 6 people | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide condiments only upon request, and in single-use (non-reusable) portions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a hand sanitizing station available upon entry to the restaurant | <input type="checkbox"/> Use disposable menus (new for each patron) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging contactless payment. When not available, minimizing contact | <input type="checkbox"/> Employees serving buffet foods to customers |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging contactless payment. When not available, minimizing contact |

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Health Protocols for Your Facilities

- ☐ Consider having an employee manage and control access to the restaurant, including opening doors to prevent patrons from touching door handles.
- ☐ Regularly and frequently clean and disinfect any commonly touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, tables, chairs, and restrooms
- ☐ Clean and disinfect the area used for dining (table, etc.) after each group of customers depart, including the disinfecting of tables, chairs, stalls, and countertops
- ☐ Disinfect any items that come into contact with customers
- ☐ Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to employees and customers
- ☐ Place visible signage around the restaurant to remind everyone of best hygiene practices

Health Protocols for Your Employees

- ☐ Train all employees on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette
- ☐ Have employees maintain at least 6 ft of separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not possible, then rigorously practice other protective measures including face covering, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation
- ☐ Have employees wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the food establishment and between interactions with customers
- ☐ Consistent with the actions taken by many retailers across the state, consider having all employees wear cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth). If available, employees should consider wearing non-medical grade face masks
- ☐ Screen employees before coming into the restaurant
- ☐ Send home any employee who has any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea
 - Feeling feverish or measured temperature greater than $> 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$
 - Known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19
- ☐ Do not allow employees with new or worsening signs or symptoms listed above to return to work until:
 - ☐ If the employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, they may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met:
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (having no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications)
 - The individual has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
 - ☐ If the employee has COVID-19 symptoms and does not get tested or evaluated by a medical professional, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19. The individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above
 - ☐ If the employee or volunteer has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual to return to work based on an alternative diagnosis.
- ☐ Do not allow an employee with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14 days self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure (with an exception granted for healthcare workers and critical infrastructure workers)

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